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Despite the critical failure of many urban schools to educate poor children and children of color, there are examples of schools and teachers who help students meet challenging academic standards in a supportive, culturally responsive, and empowering context. This paper represents one such success story of a teacher's efforts to nurture his students' motivation to learn, to build on their strengths, and to create a strong sense of future among them. Student and teacher interviews and frequent observations resulted in the identification of several strategies the teacher consistently used to tap into his students' natural motivation, to foster resilience, and to translate their strengths into marketable skills. The paper also highlights students' perceptions and interpretations of their classroom experiences to delineate those instructional activities that motivate and inspire them. (Contains 26 references.) (Author/SLD)

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NURTURING URBAN ADOLESCENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN: A TEACHER'S STRATEGIES AND HIS STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS*

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ABSTRACT

Despite the critical failure of many urban schools to educate poor children and children of color, there are examples of schools and teachers who help students meet challenging academic standards in a supportive, culturally responsive, and empowering context. This paper represents one such success story of a teacher's efforts to nurture his students' motivation to learn, build on their strengths and create a strong sense of future among them. Based on student and teacher interviews and frequent observations, we have identified several strategies the teacher consistently utilizes to tap into his students' natural motivation, foster resilience, and translate their strengths into marketable skills. The paper also highlights students' perceptions and interpretations of their classroom experiences to delineate those instructional activities which motivate and inspire them.

NURTURING URBAN ADOLESCENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN: A TEACHER'S STRATEGIES AND HIS STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

"There's a lot of cyncism. There's a lot of jaded stuff ... but, despite that there is a way. There is a way to reach them. There's a way to motivate them. There's a way to get that additional effort out of them, but you're not going to be able to grab them and put them in a half nelson and force them to do it. They have to want to. So, how to make them want to, that's what I'm working on."

—Mr. Picard, 1994

INTRODUCTION

Despite the critical failure of many urban schools to educate poor children and children of color, there are examples of schools and teachers who help students meet challenging academic standards in a supportive, culturally responsive, and empowering context (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tharp, 1989). As part of the research and development activities we undertake in the Mid-Atlantic region, we are interested in documenting models of success in urban education. During the spring of 1994 we were invited by Mr. Picard, an instructor at a large high school in Philadelphia, to visit his classroom in order to help him delineate the kinds of teaching strategies he was employing that appeared to support the high levels of motivation he was observing among his students. Based on our initial conversations with Mr. Picard and some preliminary observations of his classes, it appeared that he was employing successful teaching strategies with his urban high school students which encouraged our interest in conducting an ethnographic case study of his classroom.

Mr. Picard invited us to his classroom after learning about the Urban Learner Framework (Williams and Newcombe, 1994) developed by Urban Education project

staff which he saw as a source of theoretical grounding to undergird his teaching practices.[1]

Upon receiving the consent of the principal, we began investigating Mr. Picard's classroom where we found many students exhibiting high levels of engagement and enthusiasm about learning. In addition, many students expressed a strong and hopeful sense of future. To help us understand the importance of the teacher's efforts which seemed to increase his students' excitement about learning we turned to the existing research on motivation.

A consistent finding from the literature on motivation indicates that greater learning occurs when students are committed to learning, personally involved in the learning process, and intrinsically motivated (Alexander & Murphy, 1994). Virtually all of this research has focused on aspects of students' behavior in response to teachers' activities, such as choice of task, engagement, and willingness to persist at a task. As a

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[1] In brief, the Urban Learner Framework (Urban Education Project, 1994; Williams and Newcombe, 1994) presents four research-based themes, which, in combination, generate a vision of urban learners as culturally-diverse, capable, motivated, and resilient. This new vision of the urban learner focuses on urban children's cultural backgrounds, their unique strengths and talents, and the importance of tapping into their intrinsic motivation and effort. These elements, taken together, foster students' resilience and their likelihood of leading productive, successful lives. The Urban Learner Framework also discusses the ramifications of the research-based themes for decisionmaking within the four functional areas of school organization. The four classic functional areas of school organization include: (1) determining appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (2) designing effective staff development programs; (3) establishing a supportive school environment; and (4) building visionary leadership and effective management.

result, various constructs have been recognized as precursors to motivation in students (Pintrich et al, 1993). Classroom context, including teaching strategies, is one such construct that has been focused on in regard to students' motivation and engagement in learning.

Teacher strategies such as acknowledging students' personal goals and providing a supportive and encouraging environment have been found to positively influence student engagement in learning activities (Pintrich et al., 1993, Brophy, 1987). Additionally, Miller (1994) indicates that teachers can foster motivation in students by paying close attention to conditions that help students experience intrinsic rewards and maintaining a balance between challenging activities and students' capabilities (Brophy, 1987). Other teacher strategies such as maintaining high expectations for student achievement and incorporating information that is personally relevant to students into instruction have proven particularly effective for urban children, whose interests and experiences are often quite foreign to traditional curriculum content (Forsyth, 1993).

Although many of these studies provide insight into some key methods and approaches to increasing students' motivation to learn, they do not give much attention to how these strategies play out in everyday classroom situations, nor do they provide much detail with regard to how teachers develop and sustain successful strategies. Moreover, given the paucity of research on students' experiences of curriuculum (Erickson and Schultz, 1992) it is important to document students' responses to and

perceptions of teachers' strategies so that educators can develop successful instructional activities which connect to students' interests and backgrounds. In addition, most research has viewed teaching as "treatment" and has not given attention to the "mutual influence of students and teachers or what the student or the teacher thinks or cares about during the course of that mutual influence" (Erickson and Schultz, 1992, p.467). This study focuses on a teacher's strategies and his students' experiences and perceptions of a particular curriculum in an urban, vocational high school shop.

SETTING AND METHODS

The setting for this study, North City High School[2], is a public high school located in one of the most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods of a large northeastern metropolitan area. The school (grades 9-12) is large with approximately 2,900 students who come from lower and working class backgrounds. The student population is predominantly Hispanic (aproximately 78%). The remaining students are African-American (15%), Southeast Asian (6%), and White (1%). The majority of NCHS students reside in the immediate neighborhood which is presently characterized by high levels of unemployment, abandoned factories, empty lots, dilapidated housing, and frequent crime. Journalists and students report that guns and illegal drugs are readily available on street corners not far from the school.

The school is a new facility which opened in 1988 to replace an old, inadequate

[2] Pseudonyms are used to refer to people and places

structure nearby. It is a comprehensive high school with a vocational skills center. There are approximately 200 staff members (academic, vocational, administrative, and support personnel). The vocational skills center has a variety of "shops" including: auto-mechanics, baking, computer service technology, drafting design techniques, health related technology, and industrial electricity.

This study focuses on Mr. Picard's audio/visual communications technology (AVCT) shop. The shop is comprised of a television studio and a control room. The studio section has room for classroom desks and a blackboard, and also has most of the equipment (lights, cameras, props) found in a professional television studio. The control room overlooks the studio and houses the technology necessary for audio/visual productions (e.g., character generator, switcher, editing suite, sound mixer, lighting board).

There are approximately 20 students in each of the two sections of the AVCT class, which both run for about two hours each day. During the rest of the day, these students are enrolled in traditional academic classes, including math, English, social studies, and science.

Several visits were made to the school toward the end of the 1993-1994 academic year to make some preliminary observations and to interview Mr. Picard. At the beginning of the 1994-1995 school year we began visiting the class once a week to make

systematic observations of daily classroom activities.[3] During these weekly visits we spent the entire day in the classroom observing instructional activities, teacher-student interaction, and peer relations. Interviews with the teacher were conducted between the two classes and after school, while interviews with students took place at lunch and during class time after they have finished their assignments. Interviews and field notes were then transcribed and analyzed. During the beginning stages of this project, we focused on observations of the class and in-depth interviews with Mr. Picard to document the daily flow of the class and to obtain his interpretations of successful and less than successful teaching strategies. Subsequently, we obtained informed consent and began to interview students about their daily experiences and perceptions of the class. The following sections present recurrent patterns from our ongoing observations of daily classroom activities combined with frequent, in-depth interviews of the teacher and his students. These patterns represent aspects of Mr. Picard's classroom environment and teaching strategies which appear to nurture and increase urban adolescents' natural motivation to learn.

RECURRENT THEMES

Caring Classroom Context

One of the features of the AVCT class which we were initially struck by and have

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3 David Kinney conducted interviews and observations during the entire school year and was joined in the field by Jennifer Eaton in January 1995.

continued to see frequently is a high level of caring exhibited among the students and between the teacher and students. Caring classroom communities are characterized by Solomon et al. (1992) as environments where a feeling of mutual concern exists between the teacher and students and where all students are contributing members. We know from motivation research that when students feel that classroom values and responsibility are important for the group as a whole, they are more likely to embrace these values for themselves and be commited to learning (Lewis et al., 1995). Teachers can help to foster this environment by showing concern for all students and displaying interest in students' ideas, projects, and experiences. Numerous students in a study carried out by Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1992) expressed their preference for caring classrooms where they feel a sense of belonging, where they know the teacher and other students, and where they feel comfortable being themselves. Mr. Picard's students expressed similar preferences regarding classroom environment. One young male student we interviewed noted that in Mr. Picard's class:

> I feel the most comfortable .... and I come in that class and just be myself and learn at the same time. I can be myself and learn and be responsible at the same time ... and that's how you can be comfortable in the class. ... if you can be yourself, plus do what you gotta do at the same time.

We also frequently observed Mr. Picard creating a comfortable learning environment by working one-on-one with students, listening attentively to their questions and concerns, and exhibiting sensitivity to the adversities students from

economically disadvantaged backgrounds face in the urban environment. Several times during class we observed Mr. Picard responding to students who appeared distressed or unhappy about some out-of-class incident by taking them aside and listening to their concerns. Mr. Picard displayed his awareness of the many obstacles his students face on a daily basis in the following statement:

> I'm not going to sit here and tell you that I have developed some kind of heavy thesis on, you know, the psychology of the urban, the typical urban setting that these kids come from. Cause I haven't. But I do know that the family situation, the socioeconomic situation, there's a whole lot of instability and psycho-emotional destablizing factors that make for less than a focused human being who is able to deal with his or her own strengths, fine-tune focus, and be objective and task-completion oriented. What I want to be able to do is I want to try make my program as conducive to developing those things as I can.

Students recognize and appreciate Mr. Picard's concern for their well-being. When asked what things make Mr. Picard's class a good class one student responded:

> He ... I like the way he like ask you questions like if he see you coming in there looking, you know, upset or whatever, he'll ask you questions like what is wrong with you ... he concerned about people!

Overall, we noticed Mr. Picard consistently expresses caring and concern for students in a number of ways. For example, we observed him recounting a homicide he witnessed near the school on his way to work one morning. He told the students he observed a T.V. news crew videotaping the murder scene activities. After class that day we interviewed Mr. Picard about this story and inquired why he had brought it up in class. He responded:

> They're living with violence in their world all the time in a way that is much removed from people like myself, fortunately, who look at the news and that's as close as I get to it. It isn't in my face the way it is for them a lot of ways. So, I wanted them to know that I knew that it was happening, that it was going on. And again, to use that as an opportunity to get them to think and try to be careful as they travel and as they do what they do. Because, maybe what I do when I'm doing that kind of thing, is I'm saying to them, I think you're valuable. I think that you need to take care of yourself, that you are worth taking care of and you need to just keep an eye on situations that surround you because you never can tell.

It is clear from our observations and interviews with students that Mr. Picard works hard to offer a caring, supportive atmosphere for his students and they recognize that he cares about their lives and their futures. For example, one student commented that:

> [Mr. Picard] asks you like how you doing in the other classes or if like you have a problem, he's there for you. He makes sure everything is all right. Like, if you need [some time to be] by yourself, he'll let you be by yourself. Take care of what you got to take care of first and then, like he makes sure that you're not only passing in his class, but in the other classes ... and like the other kids, they care too, because like ... the teamwork, [other students] show that they care about your grade too 'cause they're helping you.

Another important component of a caring classroom community involves a feeling of connection between students. Students who work together in teams rather than competing against each other develop a shared sense of purpose and learn to value each others' individual strengths (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1995) Mr. Picard fosters teamwork by encouraging students who are not familiar with certain pieces of

equipment to work with other students who are more acquainted with the technology. Students report enjoying peer teaching, as one student described working with another, "I was like, he know what he is doing...so just another student, I was more comfortable and after school I [stayed] and he worked with me some more." When we asked another student "What kind of classroom environment helps you do your best work?" he said,

> When you have ... students, like friends that will help you do your work. If you need help they don't just sit there and fuss about it like they'll get up and they'll help you basically. Let's say you need somebody for the camera and you ask somebody, nine out of ten times they're going to say `Okay, I'll work the camera.' So, that's basically it. They're there when you need them.

We freqently observed Mr. Picard's students working together. Moreover, we noted how students who were not previously friends have become close friends through working together in the AVCT class.

Mr. Picard instills a feeling of teamwork and encourages students to help each other and work together, which adds to their comfort level in his classroom. As he noted, "The whole feeling in the class of knowledge being a shared commodity is encouraged by this [teamwork] and by letting them know that you're not trying to convince them that you have a monopoly on knowledge itself."

In addition to experiencing cooperation and teamwork, students described the class as having a friendly atmosphere where learning is fun. One student said,

> He doesn't only teach, he make it a fun class and on top of that he makes sure all of us get together and work together and he brings us all together. That's what I like about his class, everybody knows each other and is nice to each other and we're friends.

Another student remarked that:

> [Mr. Picard is] like down-to-earth. He's real, like he's more real than a lot of teachers out here in the school or other schools.... He's more like a guy who's just trying to show us things...a friend of ours who learned something new and he's trying to teach us the same thing.

Overall, our observations are consistent with Mr. Picard's views that the climate of the classroom promotes collaboration among students and affirmative teacher-student relations. Regarding the classroom environment, Mr. Picard stated:

> I would like to think that I [make] them feel welcome, and [make] them sort of feel like it's almost a club, family, fun kind of thing. And that if they miss it, they're missing something that they like, so that they don't want to miss it.

While we find that the caring and collaborative classroom environment is a crucial element of Mr. Picard's success, it is also important to note that this environment provides the foundation for other strategies he uses to encourage motivation and achievement. We now turn to a discussion of these strategies.

Learner-Focused Instruction

The second recurring theme from our data analysis indicates that Mr. Picard tailors most instructional activities to students' experiences and interests. One of Mr. Picard's primary strategies is to structure class assignments so that students have a

great deal of choice and freedom to create within the assigned framework. He explains,

> Maybe it's just a sort of narrow perspective on my part, but I just get the distinct impression that it's an uncommon experience for them to be asked what are you interested in, what do you want to look at, what do you want to intellectually pursue?

Brophy (1987) suggests that one way to capitalize on students' existing motivation to learn is by tailoring tasks to students' interests and allowing students to work with topics that they find exciting and personally relevant. In addition, by allowing students to have some choice in their activities and assignments, motivation to learn can be heightened through the commitment to tasks that students experience when they are able to exercise autonomy and creativity in their efforts (Good & Brophy, 1986).

One of Mr. Picard's classroom projects centers on this aspect of autonomy and student choice by allowing students to select pictures and text from magazines to communicate their own vision for a product or service. The assignments assure that students will learn more about audio-visual technology and communication skills, while at the same time allows them to take control of the project and incorporate their own ideas and concerns into the task. These class assignments allow students to draw on meaningful life experiences they have had and aspects of their cultural backgrounds which are important to them. Drawing on urban learners' social experiences and cultural backgrounds is a central feature of the Urban Learner Framework (e.g.,

Williams and Newcombe, 1994) and has been found by other researchers to improve students' performance as they see connections between the curriculum and their lives outside of school (e.g., Sylvester, 1994; Tharp, 1989).

Students have drawn on advertisements for such things as sports, cosmetics, cars, biotechnology, and recent films about race and other social issues. With regard to this issue of experiencing autonomy and drawing on issues which matter to them a female student noted that:

> [Mr. Picard] gives me freedom to do what I had to do... as far as my ideas, or anything, it was me ... it's my creativity. I get to put what I want to put [into it].

Another related strategy which Mr. Picard uses is to draw on film and literature which connects to students' backgrounds and interests. For instance, while talking about why he used segments of the PBS series Baseball, to illustrate communication through film, Mr. Picard stated:

> I ... select parts that I think will be of particular interest, where they're talking about baseball players that were recruited from Puerto Rico and Cuba, because so many of the students at this school are Hispanic. I ... use sections where they talk about how black baseball players were restricted from participating in the sport for so many years. And the interest in this civil rights aspect of it is a way of sort of finding an angle.

Mr. Picard's students respond well to having a great deal of choice in their work and it is evident that they are quite passionate about their ideas and projects. One student illustrates how important it was to relate a class project to his own life

experiences in the following statement:

> See I wrote thirteen [pages of] script one night in a couple hours and it has sex, drugs, and violence; normal teenage stuff from experience, what I saw growing up... I just remember everything, I wrote it down on paper... I got a kid now, and one on the way and I'm still in high school, so I wanted to put that down so the people could see that.

Another student commented on how Mr. Picard allows him to take control of his own projects and supports his ideas:

> He, you know, he sees something that [I've done] and he gets in to it. He's not like the teacher that be like alright yeah, [that's nice]. He really gets in to it, you know. And he, whatever you give Mr. Picard, he'll work with you with it till the end. Even if he don't think the audience is going to like it, he'll still work with you just to give you, ... the inspiration. He always there for me when I need him when I'm going to do a project.

Mr. Picard has come to realize that by allowing students to take control of their learning and consistently drawing on their daily life experiences and cultural backgrounds, he is beginning to tap their natural motivation. While telling us about a short film production project that his students designed he explained:

> ... this is stretching it [the curriculum] out. This is not...can they operate the equipment? That's not going to really inspire a whole lot of enthusiasm or capture the energy. I know for a fact that that approach is not going to light the fire that got lit in here that had kids go home and write nine, ten, and thirteen pages [of script] overnight.

One of the outcomes of the autonomy and choice students are permitted to exercise in Mr. Picard's class is that they are able to develop their individual strengths. Class assignments require that students learn about and use a wide array of equipment

(e.g. cameras, lights, character generator, switcher, editing board, audio mixer), and we have observed individual students exploring the equipment and discovering where their talents and preferences lie. In reference to a class movie project Mr. Picard asserted that:

> [I] want to give people an opportunity to be involved in a way that they can be involved, 'cause not everybody's going to be able to write a script or a story... The whole idea is that people are starting to demonstrate that they have a particular niche that they can fill. What I said to [the students] was that this project will be completed and that at the end of the process there will be a product that everybody should get on their video notebook and the credits should role at the end and everybody in this class should have their name in the credits, not just as a gift, not just 'cause they were here, but because they did what they did.

Students enjoy developing their expertise in certain areas. For example, the following excerpt from our fieldnotes was typical:

> Mr. Picard chooses a camera person, a sound person, and a director to set up and videotape an assembly in the auditorium honoring the jazz great and Philadelphia-born John Coltrane. The students quickly gather the equipment they need and proceed quietly to the auditorium. Once in the auditorium the students go about the business of efficiently setting up the camera and laying the cables so that the assembly can be broadcast throughout the school. Once the assembly begins each student focuses on his or her task and listens to directions from the student director who receives some guidance from Mr. Picard from the control room upstairs via intercom. The students take their roles seriously, yet smile and have fun during the taping. They also exhibit ease and confidence while handling their various roles. After the taping Mr. Picard deems the taping a wonderful success, saying to the team as they were packing up their equipment that they `... did a most excellent job! I look forward to shaking your hands!' (Fieldnotes, 2-23-95).

We also often watched students asking others for help in areas that they are unfamiliar

with and offering help in areas where they feel most competent. One student explained:

> Like yesterday, one of the students, they didn't really know how to do a level five with program description and everything and since I'm real good with that [Mr. Picard] sent her over to me and I helped her out and she got it done. So, it's basically helping each other out to do the best.

Another student felt that the overall friendliness of the class was due in part to students being allowed to fill particular roles based on their knowledge and interests. He said:

> I think it's because this class is more like somebody knows what they're doing and then there's the laborers and they do the manual stuff. You know, 'cause there's stuff that goes into like storyboards and directing and then there's the laborers who do the lighting and move the camera and stuff like that. So I guess it balances each other out. Some people don't want to be the leader or whatever, they just want to do the work. And other people want to do the leading and it balances each other out and we work together good like that.

Building a Sense of Future

The classroom characteristics and teacher strategies outlined above all contribute to students' confidence that they are capable, talented individuals who have important skills to offer society and the world of work. Mr. Picard has implemented several strategies which help to engender a strong sense of future in his students. He continually relates to his students that the field of communications offers a wide range of occupational opportunities and lets them know that he believes that they have the skills and knowledge to be successful. In one particular activity Mr. Picard encourages his students to explicate the underlying messages communicated by an advertisement.

This approach focuses on helping his students see how important it is to be creative when trying to communicate their ideas and points of view to an audience. We have observed that Mr. Picard continually makes references to how the skills students learn in class are applicable to potential job opportunities in their future; he noted:

> So, I mean, if they can get this idea then they will hopefully be able to make a difference in their own perception of the possibility that they are actually learning some things that they might be able to use in the future to compete with other people, to get the kind of jobs that those people have doing commercials, doing camera work, setting up the lights, putting make-up on the fruit, and doing special effects and doing sound and these kind of things. [I want the students to say], '... I saw a commercial like that and I could do that. I could do that.' That's hopefully what they get out of it is a feeling of confidence.

Interviews with students confirmed Mr. Picard's hopes that they feel as though the skills they are learning in class are pertinent to their futures. One student said appreciatively:

> Basically, he like is more preparing us for the future. Like last year he was doing like little projects and stuff like that. But this year is more about jobs... He trying to give us information about [making] movies, he is trying to prepare us for the future and try to make sure we get enough money so we can support our kids or whatever for the future. That is what he is doing for us now. It is very important! [And] I feel relief that somebody is looking out for the future for us. It is very good that somebody is.

Students see clear connections between what they are learning in Mr. Picard's class and their future goals. It is evident that because of this connection, students feel that the work they do in class is important and relevant for their lives and thus it inspires them

to work hard at what they do. One student commented:

> It's really really getting me prepared for when I get out in the real world and [I really do this]. Mr. Picard helps me out a lot like writing scripts and movies, directing movies, and working with the character generator, the switcher, the edit board. It's helping me a lot... I already got a lot of experience. Other people [are going to be] shocked that I'm so young and I know so much about it.

Another student told us that when the classwork seems to help him prepare for his future, it is more enjoyable to learn and easier to grasp. He explained how Mr. Picard encourages this:

> He talks with his students. You know he doesn't hand you a test booklet and say read chapter five through eight and answer the questions on the back. That's just like being a robot. You know, you're reading it but you're not soaking it in. And here it's more hands-on, you know, he'll be there with you. 'Cause if it's not hands-on, I mean when you finally get out to the job you're like I read all this in the textbook but it's still not the same thing. When you have hands-on, when you do it hands on it's like you know where it's at. You can jump on it fast and it sinks in harder.

OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION

Nurturing Students Motivation to Learn

Many of the strategies employed by Mr. Picard in his teaching have been found by researchers to make a difference in the lives of children and adolescents in a variety of classrooms. Specifically, teachers who recognize students' backgrounds, culture, and diverse ways of interacting with subject matter, are able to develop strategies that utilize students' strengths and help them to become engaged in learning activities (Ladson-Billings, 1990, 1994; Sylvester, 1994; Williams & Newcombe, 1994). In doing so,

a classroom environment can be created in which each learner's cultural identity is valued and used as one basis for instruction (Tharp, 1989). We believe that Mr. Picard's class embodies critical elements of such an environment.

Mr. Picard explained the importance of having a classroom of motivated students and believes that it is his responsibility to offer students the kind of curriculum that keeps them excited and enthusiastic about learning. Describing one of the students in his class, he stated:

> He has to ... be given that responsibility because he's good, but he's still young. So, unless I keep him satisfied, I risk losing his enthusiasm and his motivation level. So, that's one of the things that I am constantly trying to monitor with all of these students, is their motivation and enthusiasm levels because if I can keep those fairly high, then I can be relatively assured that they will be taking as much advantage of the opportunities to learn about working together, about managing people, about making a total product happen through a process of teamwork.

In sum, Mr. Picard has extended the traditional curriculum in ways in which classroom activities become meaningful and exciting for the students. We often observed the students highly engaged and focused on their assignments and projects. We consistently noticed that most students were getting their work done and having fun at the same time. As one student said:

> The teacher, he's not dull ... he makes it fun when you work he makes it fun so you get more into your work, you want to do more. So like, you got to have a teacher who will help you, but like take things seriously, but not too seriously until the point where you're going to hate his class. You've got to have some fun. Especially in our shop, we have lots of fun working the cameras and the editor and the switcher and everything.

Along similar lines, a different student responded to our question, "What is it like to be a student in Mr. Picard's class?", by saying:

> It is good! 'Cause when I go to [other classes] everyday, I be like `Oh man, this class', but when I go to Mr. Picard's class, I be motivated! And his class is like towards the end of the day, that is when you really get tired. When I go to his class I be motivated!

In addition to our interview and observational data which indicated high levels of motivation among Mr. Picard's students, we found that many of these students expressed high aspirations. For example, many students were actively planning on attending two- and four-year colleges to acquire more training in audio-video technology or a related field. Other students expressed interest in seeking internships and/or employment at local television stations and film production houses. Much of this interest was fostered by Mr. Picard's ability to make connections with local production companies and to arrange for field trips to various audio-visual technology offices and studios in the city, in order to allow students to see connections between what they learned in class and actual jobs . Overall, the vast majority of students we interviewed had a concrete vision for their future and were eager to talk about their plans and aspirations. One student told us:

> I'm thinking of going to college, getting my bachelors degree on broadcasting and film, and just work on broadcasting and hopefully do some movies on some stories I'm writing now. But really broadcasting, you know, start small and then get bigger. But I want to continue this.

Another student explained how Mr. Picard and the AVCT class will influence his future plans:

> Next year I finish high school, go to college. He'll [Mr. Picard] give me a letter of recommendation to colleges, especially for what I want to do. He's a teacher and it's only my first year and like, I've gone far. And then next year I'll go even further the way I plan and then that'll look real good on a college resume for what I'm going for.

We feel that another indicator of students' motivation in Mr. Picard's class is their displayed concentration and exhibited creativity. These AVCT students are very proud of their work and were anxious to show their work to friends, family members, and visitors to the class. Many students spent long hours after class time working on projects to add to their video notebooks and they were respectful and supportive of other students hard work and dedication. Overall, students in Mr. Picard's class feel that good grades are important to ensure their success in future aspirations and they work hard to receive top marks as well as to produce work that they can feel proud of.

Discussion

Recently, researchers and policy makers have discussed the importance of developing resilience in urban teenagers to insulate them from negative social forces and to help them to reach their future goals. As a result, interest has developed in investigating students who succeed in the face of adversity to identify personal

characteristics of these resilient children (e.g., Benard, 1991; Rutter, 1987; Wilson, 1994; Winfield, 1991). Benard (1993) identifies social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future as four main characteristics that resilient children possess. Educators who nurture these elements of resilience by offering students a curriculum that is personally worth learning, challenging and relevent to their future goals are more likely to help students become motivated, lifelong learners (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1995). Unfortunately, little research has addressed those instructional activities and teacher-student relations which provide the foundation for urban adolescents to develop a strong sense of future and eagerness to learn.

Our findings that Mr. Picard's students express high levels of motivation in combination with strong aspirations, suggests that these students are developing a crucial aspect of resilience. Specifically, these students' realization that the skills they are learning in class are directly relevent for many occupations in the real world, is helping them to develop a strong sense of future.

In addition, drawing on Bonnie Benard's (1993) research synthesis on resilience, Krovetz and Speck (1995) argue that in order for a school to be successful in fostering student resilience, teachers need to create a caring environment where students feel they have the necessary support to reach their goals. Much of the literature indicates that a caring, supportive adult, be it a parent, friend, or teacher, is instrumental in the lives of resilient children. A caring teacher acts not only as an instructor, but also as a

posititve role model and confidant (Werner, 1992). We hope this case study gives a clear example of how one teacher helped his students to become more resilient by offering a caring environment, exciting and relevant curriculum, and a vision for the future .

Some commentators might argue that Mr. Picard's students' high levels of engagement and success is primarily due to the nature of an audio visual technology class (i.e., the students' opportunity to use advanced technology including computers, cameras, and switchers). We realize that technology can be a motivator and that these students are acclimated toward it, but we feel that having access to technology is not the only factor which influences Mr. Picard's students' excitement about learning. We feel that the combination of strategies Mr. Picard employs on a daily basis (e.g. learner focused instruction, caring classroom environment, building on students' strengths, fostering students' sense of purpose and future) are the most crucial components of his class and can be integrated into any curriculum.

The comments of one of the first students to be interviewed continues to inspire our efforts to document the essence of Mr. Picard's strategies and his students' responses to those efforts throughout the year; "If it wasn't for this class, I wouldn't even want to come to school!"

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